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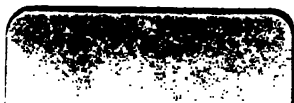
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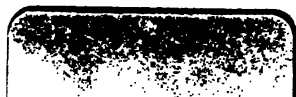
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УДАРЕЛІ ПРОМАТЪ

J. PETER LESLEY

**BORN PHILADELPHIA, SEPTEMBER 17, 1819; DIED MILTON, MASS.,
JUNE 1, 1903**

SUSAN INCHES LESLEY

(née LYMAN)

**BORN NORTHAMPTON, MASS., APRIL 7, 1823; DIED MILTON,
JANUARY 16, 1904**



PETER AND SUSAN LESLEY.*

“It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgment.” — HEBREWS ix. 27 (Rev. Ver.).

EVERY day, by speech or in silence, we pass judgment upon our fellows; and, when they die, we sum up our little imperfect knowledges, mixed with guesses and impressions, and pronounce a qualified sentence of praise or blame for “the deeds done in the body.” This fact of itself has made thoughtful men in all ages regard death as a solemn crisis in the history of a man. It is the closing of a chapter, the making up and balancing of an account. Our moral sense, in its small way, affirms that every man must at last pass for what he is, when his life is reviewed and his character scrutinized by the All-seeing.

And how long is the scale of differences! There are all grades of excellence and defect, of merit and demerit, of honor and shame. The clod and the nugget, the pebble and the gem, do not differ

* A Memorial Discourse, preached in the Church of the Disciples, Boston, Jan. 24, 1904, by Charles Gordon Ames.

more than one man and another. In reviewing some lives, we seem to traverse dreary wastes of sand : in others, we are exploring gold mines and diamond fields.

The nineteenth century yielded a rich product of good men and women : death and heaven are still gathering the glorious harvest. The younger generation — so soon in its turn to become the elder — will be impoverished so far as it misses the knowledge and inspiration of such a record. For the best lives, whether great or humble,

“ . . . All remind us
We can make our lives sublime.”

They reprove our neglect, shame our cowardice and sloth, exalt our ideals, and encourage our aspirations. And all just praise to those who have lived wisely and well is really praise to Him from whom cometh every good and perfect gift.

On the 4th of June last, some of us stood in awe around the silent form of Peter Lesley. Rarely have I seen a nobler face in flesh or in marble. We do not talk of any man we have known as perfect. But, after all allowances and deductions for human faults, weaknesses, limitations, and infirmities of

temperament, few men of his time have showed such a handsome sum of personal qualities and services. And when, on Tuesday last, we gathered again in the same Milton cottage, and bent over the precious dust of Susan Lesley, I think the judgment as well as the feeling of those who had known the true story of her fourscore years concurred in the verdict of one who said, "No possible words of praise could seem extravagant." United in life, in death they were not long divided.

Peter Lesley was a city boy, son of a Philadelphia carpenter, a man of high-strung nerves, but of sterling sense and Christian virtues. The children were taught the use of their minds, their eyes and hands; taught also to revere God and keep the commandments. This lad was a passionate lover of knowledge, especially devoted to language and science, and passed swiftly forward in school and college to a course in divinity at Princeton,—more than eighty years after the brief presidency of Jonathan Edwards, who was still the patron saint. These stages were only the beginnings of a course of lifelong study, pursued with a single eye to truth and duty. Any well-born youth who enters on his earthly

career with such endowments — such fine possession of his bodily and mental faculties, such keen relish for knowledge and such high purpose — will not be hindered from mounting toward the heights by the difficulties of climbing, by scanty means, precarious health, or any conquerable obstacle. It was toward the higher levels that this young man had put himself in motion.

In 1844, having been licensed to preach by the Presbytery of Philadelphia, he went to study for a season at the University of Halle, in Germany; then for about two years he travelled in Pennsylvania as evangelist and colporteur of the American Tract Society; but from 1848 to 1851 he was pastor of the Congregational Church in Milton, Mass. Meanwhile, he found himself suspected and accused of unsoundness of doctrine. The pressure of ecclesiastical authority affected him like a usurpation, or a denial of Christian liberty, to which he could not submit without violating the higher injunction to “call no man master.”

The same impulse of honesty and faithfulness that led him into the Calvinistic ministry soon led him through it and out of it, and made him a man of science and a practical servant of mankind.

Withdrawing from the pulpit about 1852, he settled in Philadelphia, and devoted himself to science, and especially to the study of geology, in which he rapidly rose to distinction as an authority and to eminence as an expert. His Alma Mater, the University of Pennsylvania, offered him the professorship of geology and mining and made him dean of the scientific faculty. There were various intervals of foreign travel, which brought him into relations of pleasure and profit with eminent men of science.

In 1874 began the great work of his life—a mountainous work—as head of the Second Geological Survey of Pennsylvania. In his youth he had shown aptitude and ability in the service of the First Survey, and had won the recognition and confidence of his chief. He was already fifty-four years old, and had been admonished of constitutional liabilities by sharp crises of nervous suffering.

Whether an official position shall mean little or much depends on the man who accepts it. The Secretary of the Board of Education was little regarded in Massachusetts until Horace Mann was appointed. His industry, breadth of view, and

enthusiasm made it as important as the office of the governor. As chief of the First State Survey of Pennsylvania, Henry D. Rogers had set a high standard; as chief of the second, Professor Leslie carried it to pre-eminence.

Conceive the magnitude of his undertaking. He must master the substructure of the earth's surface as a surgeon masters anatomy. He must carefully select and organize a large staff of assistants, and direct their operations over a wide area of forty-five thousand square miles. He must find and delimit, so far as possible, the location and extent of every deposit of useful minerals—iron, coal, petroleum—in a State where the development of these industries gives employment to many thousands of men and many millions of capital. He must produce and verify from actual field survey maps and charts which present to the eye the courses of the streams, the altitude of the mountains and hills, the contour of the surface, the dips and uplift and contortions of the outcropping strata, in every township of the sixty-six counties. He must superintend the engraving and publication of these maps and charts, along with full letter-press reports of all the field and office work; and

he must be responsible for the accuracy of every line and detail.

But it is not work that wears men out. Think what it means to carry such a load for twenty years, with limited and uncertain resources, irregularly granted by a succession of legislatures, subject to the vicissitudes of politics, and largely composed of ignorant men of narrow views and suspicious spirit, who could see in the Geological Survey only a put-up job to enable some kid-gloved city fellows to get their hands into the State treasury! There was also the antagonism or hostility of rival mining companies, or of greedy speculators in stocks and lands, who would gladly have loaded him with wealth if only he would have colored or discolored his reports in their interest.

He knew, too, that any serious neglect or mistake of himself or his subordinates would work public injury, would put weapons into the hands of enemies, and leave a stain upon his professional record. Yet, if not always serene, he was always dauntless, strong in his conscious rectitude and in loving respect for his work. He had no axe to grind. Like his friend Agassiz, he could not afford to make money; and, in trying simply to do his duty, he lit-

erally worked like a willing horse harnessed to heavy load, on a long up-grade. Of course, it meant continuous overwork. But, when his friends urge the need of rest, he exclaimed: "Rest? Oh, how I hate the word!"

The printed reports of the Survey exceed a hundred volumes. But in 1895, when already past his seventy-fifth birthday, with failing sight and faltering nerve, he let fall into another hand the completion of the closing volume. He had been more careful to give credit to his lieutenants than to trumpet his own fame.

He lived eight years longer, but with a wrecked constitution, impaired fortitude, and permanent incapacity for sustained mental or physical activity. What soldier ever more truly gave life for his country?

Yet this is not the whole story. Through all the strenuous years he had kept in touch with the great world of thought, of art and humanity. Learned societies in other lands paid him honor. He had his turn in the presidency of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. He was long the Secretary of the American Philosophical Society, founded by Franklin.

He was a lover of nature. Striding across hills and through forests, with a geologist's hammer in hand and theodolite on shoulder, he still had an eye for beauty : the landscape shone and danced around him ; and the pictures of scenery then photographed on the walls of his mind were developed in those later years when the outer vision grew dim. Science had taught him also to look beyond the shows of things to their causes. He saw in the material realm the theatre of forces, such as play in the making of the globe or in building, binding, and bending the strata ; he heard the

“ Chemic hammers, without sound,
Smite and fashion under ground.”

“ When I look on a tree,” he said to me, “ I do not see a form of wood, but a form of life.”

Yet I believe his chief interest was not in physical science, but in humanity. An altruistic principle mixed itself with all his work, and pervaded his thinking like an atmosphere. Disinterested kindness and generous appreciation won the confidence and affection of his staff, some of whom came hundreds of miles to share the last tribute of respect. On the business men and State officials who really met him he made the same impression.

Probably he suffered, as Darwin did, from partial atrophy of the finer intellectual perceptions and satisfactions, through long and close devotion to material concerns ; yet he never lost his early and vital interest in literature, art, poetry, and the high things of the spirit. This was apparent when I threw himself, with wife and daughters, into the religious movement which produced the Spring Garden Unitarian Society of Philadelphia. Occasionally he would drop all else and enter the pulpit or lecture-room, to surprise and delight his fellow worshippers with a rich outpour of thought and feeling, illustrated by telling parables, drawn from stores of knowledge and experience. He also found or made time for notable contributions to the magazines and journals.

In 1865-66 he had given in Boston a course of Lowell lectures, which were published and republished under the title of "Man's Origin and Destiny, as sketched on the Platform of the Physical Sciences." I was so fortunate as to read this stimulating and suggestive volume before I met the author, and so was prepared to do homage to his mind and to appreciate the honor and blessing of friendship which was to last for thirty years.

Amid all the exactions and distractions of this man's life there was one reposeful centre. He once told me that up to his twenty-ninth year he had never met a woman for whom he deeply cared, that he had no thought of marriage, and regarded himself as a candidate for early death. When Susan Lyman first crossed his field of vision, he started from a languid mood with an impression clear as a voice, "That is my wife!" The health of both was frail: the counsel of their friends was discouraging. But the man and maid thought, if their life together was to be short, the sooner it began the better. The engagement lasted but three months; and the married life, which began in 1849, extended to fifty-four years.

Says Victor Hugo, "The soul is the only bird that can carry its own cage." These two people became deeply interested in generous uses of their strength; and the more freely it was spent, the more it came. They found a life-preserver in work,—hard work, and a great deal of it. It was often done, like Saint Paul's, "in weariness and painfulness"; but it was done.

What is marriage? It is this, at least: the loving clasp and union of spirits; two lives in one, like

the double cells of a single heart, each rejoicing the happiness of the other. How sweet, gracious and helpful may be the interchange of sympathy, sentiment, and thought! Each can tell to the other the deepest experiences, or can be understood without words and trusted without misgiving or question. Each helps to liberate, enlarge, illumine and complete the other's life. And the twain are nearer when a thousand miles apart than others may be who walk arm in arm.

Some dream or ideal of this kind probably unfolds in the mind of every well-born and pure-hearted lad or lass. Every marriage is genuine in proportion as it conforms to this ideal, even if it rarely or never fully realized. Our human world would fly to pieces, as some domestic tragedies prove, if this sacramental element were wholly absent. The beautiful miracle is marred by every personal defect of temper, temperament, or conduct by every shadow of incompatibility or unfaithfulness. It may be near the truth to say,—

“The kindest and the happiest pair
Will find occasion to forbear;
And something, every day they live,
To pity, and perhaps forgive.”

All the more important is the wise and tender hint that comes from Saint Peter — that one of the Twelve who, as we know, was a married man with a mother-in-law — when he exhorts husbands and wives to “dwell together according to knowledge, as mutual heirs of the grace of life, in order that their prayers be not hindered.”

All this, and more, belongs to my subject. Peter and Susan Lesley toiled together toward the summits of excellence. If they stumbled, it was incident to the climbing. Each left the other in unembarrassed freedom for movement, performance, and achievement. Each gave and received unbounded confidence. Each found cheer, comradeship and comfort in labors, trials, and sorrows. Each was eager to shield the other from every hurt to body or spirit.

Beautiful was their community and communion of thought as well as of affection. Mrs. Lesley shared the scholarly and professional interests of her luminous-minded husband. If she could not keep step with the processes, she caught at the results with quick and eager insight; and he thought no flight too high for her soaring wings.

There were long, weary nights when neither could

sleep for care or sorrow; and God knows he many causes they had for wakefulness. But they did not afflict each other with moans or gloom bodings. She says, "We put our sorrows into a locked chamber, that they might not interfere with duty or happiness." Not so easy was it to dismiss their concern for others. For she also says, "The trials and the difficulties of our friends should be as sacred to us as our own."

She wrote down from memory some samples of what he said to her during the dark hours. Once he draws a grim and humorsome consolation from science. When he feels useless and in the way, he is comforted by reflecting on the part which nitrogen plays in the atmosphere. It is quite inert; it does nothing to keep up life or combustion. Oxygen has to carry on all the actual business; nitrogen seems to obstruct every process; yet, if nitrogen were removed, oxygen would flame up and burn the earth to a desert of ashes. Nitrogen is good as a restraint. The air has nine parts of nitrogen to one of oxygen. Human society requires nine fools to one sage, and all organized benevolence requires nine parts of obstruction to one of zeal.*

*This is a nocturnal exaggeration. The truer proportion of the two gases is as four to one.

At another time he interprets to her the last words of Socrates to his friend : "Sacrifice a cock to Æsculapius." Was it superstition? No, indeed. It was his Greek way of saying, as he took the poison : "Praise to the god of health ! I am about to die. This medicine will be my perfect cure."

For many years I had opportunity to observe the unstinted hospitality of the Lesley home in Philadelphia. Even when work was most pressing or rest most needed, the door was open to all comers ; and there was deliberate arrangement for a succession of invited guests, with a preference for those who required, but could not afford, a change. Such burdens were borne ungrudgingly and as a matter of course. Heavier burdens that lay on the heart were lightened and partly forgotten in an unostentatious ministry to the pleasure and comfort of others. Often this required a careful economy of strength. I have known Mrs. Lesley, when passing through a course of physical depression, to shut herself up in the dark all day in order to collect strength to meet her evening guests with a smiling welcome.

Hospitality did not stop with table supplies. Her

very life and soul were shared with others in a way to suggest the deep meaning of the words, "He that eateth me shall live by me." Any wise and good word picked up in book, conversation, lecture, or sermon, was to be "handed on like bread at sacrament." The range of talk was "from grave to gay," by no means always sober and solemn. Her fund of anecdotes was enriched from the quaint lore of old Northampton and Connecticut Valley, which always had a spice of its own.

About twenty-five years ago there sprang up a lively interest in the better organizing of city charities, in the care of destitute children, in the improvement of public education, in the planting of free kindergartens and day nurseries, and in bringing women of the prosperous class to make generous uses of their leisure. The house in Clinton Street became a semi-public resort. If any dozen or score of people desired to meet for consultation or to mature plans for social service, they needed not to hire a hall: here were their headquarters.

Diogenes went about with his lantern, looking for a man. Mrs. Lesley was always eager to discover and bring forward men and women of the right spirit and of capacity for promoting the

humane interests which were on her heart and hands. Great was her joy when she found a co-worker to trust,—a combination of common sense, sweet reasonableness, and tact. Sharp was the pain when it appeared that her confidence had been misplaced. But she learned not to expect too much of poor human nature: most of the world's work must be done by imperfect instruments, if it is to be done at all.

Such activities brought her in contact with all sorts and conditions of people,—wise and otherwise, agreeable and disagreeable, generous and selfish. She had no Pharisaic affectations of infallibility, and could work with a minimum of friction, even when the conditions were trying to her feelings. She never fell into a habit of censoriousness.

“She saw the good in others, passed the evil by.”

A man of large usefulness and many fine qualities had not always been considerate. After his death she wrote: “I am thankful to remember that I never gave him one word, written or spoken, that I wish to recall. If there were misunderstandings, it was not his fault; and I only regretted it on account of the work.”

So she went her way and did her part, "with malice toward none and charity for all." But she could take the responsibility. She could cut a knot which could not be untied. And she could speak the plain, unwelcome truth when the Golden Rule so required. Could she advise that Mr. X be put in a position of trust and importance? "No, he would wreck any enterprise committed to his hands." She said afterwards, "It gave me unspeakable pain to say this: it would have given me a deeper pain not to say it."

She gladly sought and welcomed co-operation, but she did not wait for others. Like the Master whose example was her loving lifelong study, she helped the nearest sufferer. What if the Good Samaritan, who saw a man bleeding and half dead by the roadside, had said to himself, "Somebody ought to take care of this poor fellow: I will mention his case in Jericho or Jerusalem"? Mrs. Lesley saw not merely "charity cases,"—not merely masses and classes,—but individual men, women, and children. She blamed herself for missing any opportunity to help the helpless,—the worthy, the unworthy, or even the disgusting.

Here was a poor, honest fellow, deformed, and too weak for long walks. She arranged his street-car excursions with transfer tickets, and sent him to the park with a bit of luncheon.

In the House of Correction was a discontented and unhappy man, whose surroundings might make him more wretched and desperate. She sent him cheerful reading, and subscribed for the semi-weekly *Tribune* till his term should end.

She was an employment bureau for poor women in need of work. I recall one crippled dressmaker, whose weary day's work must end with a long climb to her lonely attic. For her was found a lodging up one flight and not far from the church which was her refuge and rest.

An Irish Catholic young man, with a family, a limited income, and failing health, was known to her as a faithful servitor. She invited him to her summer cottage in Milton, took him to Nahant for a day's outing, to Manchester for another. "Dennis must soon return to Philadelphia," she said; "and I want him to take back all the good he can."

One evening a pleasant party had gathered in her parlor. We noticed her repeated disappearance from the company, and only learned afterwards that a

young Englishman was dying upstairs. It had somehow come to the knowledge of the Lesleys that a stranger, stranded and penniless, was lying ill in comfortless lodgings and uncared for. They had him brought to their own home, as if he had been a son or brother. They learned from his grateful lips the address of his kindred, from whom he had estranged himself. After his death, the two families exchanged greetings across the sea, and one brother came to pay them a personal visit.

"Why doesn't Mrs. Lesley get a new carpet?" asked some gossiping neighbor. The answer was, "A poor woman has come out of the hospital after an operation, and Mrs. Lesley has sent her to Atlantic City with a nurse."

She made large use of moderate means; but she collected for benevolent objects many thousands of dollars by appeals to her friends and to persons of public spirit,—appeals always in the form of letters and generally written in the quiet hours of early morning. She made it a rule to solicit contributions in this form rather than by personal interviews, for she thought those who did not care to give would find it easier to decline. Her considerate tact was rewarded by generous responses. She had acquired

the confidence of a large circle of people, who believed she would not ask for money unless the dollars could be put to worthy use. In this propaganda she also employed printer's ink, procuring and mailing at her own cost no end of slips, leaflets, and pamphlets, selected and original.

In Miss Lucretia Hale's playful "Peterkin Papers," Mrs. Lesley figures as "the wise lady from Philadelphia." Her friends readily caught up the epithet, and used it in good earnest. Her speech and conduct were wise, and her open hand was guided by an open eye. She pondered every problem and situation that related to her work. Little wonder that women sought her counsel, and that charity visitors studied her little manual. She might have applied to herself without irreverence or insincerity the words of Jesus: "I am among you as one that serveth." She prayed with both hands. She was kind to the unthankful and the evil. There is a kind of social intercourse which is only a masked form of selfishness. She enjoyed to the full the society of interesting people, but was never on the hunt for the entrée of those selecter social circles where the cries of human distress are little heard and less heeded.

When Emerson died, she wrote me that from her girlhood he had impressed her as "a reverent listener." She knew what that meant. All through her life she heard voices and messages of the Spirit, as they came sounding down the ages and as they speak to the teachable mind. She meditated deeply the greater sayings of Old Testament and New, and was eager to

"Seize upon Truth, wherever found,
On Christian or on heathen ground."

Especially were the best things of Psalm and Gospel republished in her character, which was an illustrated edition of the Sermon on the Mount and the charity song of Paul. The whole course of her existence was educative to mind and heart and soul along the lines of the more abundant life.

The active earthly career of both these dear people was interrupted, suspended, and practically ended when failing health, declining force, and the growing burden of years detached them from the old vital interests. There was no permanent disability or breaking down till long after threescore and ten. Then crept on those shadows of mental disturbance and melancholy, to which in different ways

they were both predisposed, first by heredity and next by too lavish expenditure of nervous force.

To Professor Lesley there came a time when all the brightness of science and philosophy gave him no clear ray, a time when his sublime faith in God and man was veiled by the black cloud of cerebral exhaustion. The brain-battery would not work, the will was enfeebled, the heart fluttered with apprehensions. Occasionally flashes of light would break like sunbursts through cloud-rifts! He would rise to full length and talk in the old joyous way, out of a well-stored memory, like a man inspired. So we knew that the sun in eclipse or at midnight is still the sun, and that the mood of a day or of a year is not the man. And ever

“In the maddening maze of things,
The toss of storm and flood,”

— when he seemed drifting rudderless, helpless, hopeless,—one anchor held. Not that God was good, but that Susan was good, and their love an unchangeable fact. When he could do nothing for her comfort, still his unreasonable concern for her safety, which added to her suffering, was a testimony to his constant, undying affection.

Her one prayer was granted : If only she might

live to see him through ! Then, when all was over, and he was at rest, she lost herself in a fitful twilight of mystic sunset clouds, and disappeared whither he had gone.

There is a lesson of which we may have need, either for those who are dear to us or for ourselves. It comes from Gotthold Lessing's charge to his friends. It might be, he told them in substance, that through the weakness of disease or of old age he should lose his hold on the principles and convictions which had been formed with deliberation in the clear light and full strength of his faculties. What then ? If he should retract his rational faith and relapse into superstition, he charged them to let it pass for what it really would be,—the wanderings and maunderings of a mind in disorder, no more to be regarded than delirium or nightmare.

The real record of the noble beings with whom we have spent this hour is not written in their bad dreams, nor in the sorrowful phases of their bewilderment. Let us seek it rather in the consistent direction and worthy achievement of their lives, and in the utterances of their calm and luminous hours. In those hours what was their outlook ?

In 1884 Professor Lesley's brother Joseph died, after long disability and decline. Peter wrote me thus: "I do not grieve for Joe. He is just as present to me now, disembodied, as he has been for the last fifteen years. I have thought of him for fifteen years as dead and buried; still living, still speaking, loving, thinking of everybody's comfort, one with me in all my work, and yet unable to lift a finger to take part in my occupations. I shall so soon go to join him that his apparent departure first inspires me with no grief whatever. I have always loved men and women in the spirit, and not in the flesh. As far as I can remember, the death of the dearest friend caused only a momentary pang. My friends have always been eternal, immortal. I never change myself, and cannot comprehend any change passing on them. Neither God, nor the world, nor people, nor things, ever change to my view. . . . The most moody and uncertain of men myself, I am conscious of an absolute unchangeableness in myself; and I take it for granted that I shall never lose a friend."

So she writes after a bereavement, "To me all seems life, no death, only resurrection." And again at sixty-one: "Trying with failing powers to

be content with doing less every hour of every day, yet with minds and hearts still open and with enlarged experience to urge us onward,—what does it mean? It must mean immortal life, with powers of recuperation in no distant future.”

In a letter of 1884, after her aunt Kitty died, I find a passage which we cannot help applying to herself: “She leaves behind a most precious memory in our hearts,—a treasure laid up in heaven. I love to think of her as having laid down the weary burden of her last years. . . . She had such noble traits of character that the whole past seems glorified by them.”

These are a part of the testimonies Peter and Susan Lesley gave when all their faculties were in highest and clearest activity. They are the messages of faith, hope, and love, which come to us now like whispered music from the lips that are silent. Life, they tell us, is a divine opportunity. Death is an incident by the way,—not a blind wall, but an open door. There is but one world,—here, there, and forever. We are all related to all,—to the highest, to the lowest.

So Peter compacts his life-sermon into six words: “Be God’s child and man’s brother.”

And Susan breaks into the song of triumph which she heard from Dr. Furness above the sleeping form of one who had passed through the fire :
“ I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.”

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Peter and Susan Lealey.

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